

Parker, William Wilder  
McVinley  
Greener prairie

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# GREENER PRAIRIE

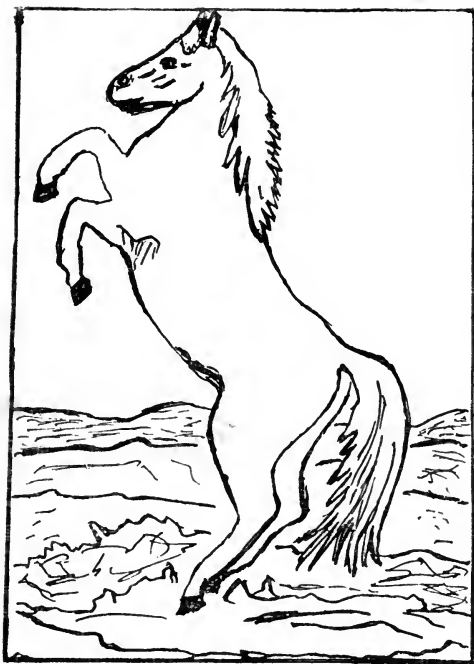
by

WILLIAM WILDER McKINLEY PARKER, I.A.I.



11223 - 76 AVENUE  
EDMONTON — ALBERTA





The horse trotted up to the doorway  
of the ranch. .

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## GREENER PRAIRIE

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# GREENER PRAIRIE

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By

William Wilder McKinley Parker



## THE AUTHOR

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An Alberta pioneer, Wm. W. Parker, homesteaded in 1914 in central Alberta near the Alaska highway fifty miles west of Edmonton. A versatile teacher and poet, he was principal five years of high schools in the north. His Peace River school won first place three years straight for its magazine in creative writing contest. He published educational games and his first Alberta song in the twenties. During the past fifteen years he has taught high school art and shop and draughting, this past year at Rosemary. Recently he has published his own books, his stories and poetry enjoying wide sale and distribution.

The author is in his last year at the University of Alberta for B.Ed. degree. In 1943 while attending the Banff School of Fine Arts on a Rockefeller Foundation scholarship he organized the Alberta Schools Creative Writing competition. For many years he was an Edmonton Journal correspondent, contributing poetry and articles regularly.

In 1912 he dined with Lord Baden Powell at a Boy Scout Leaders' banquet in Chicago. Both the author and Mrs. Parker attend the United Church at Brooks. Mrs. Parker teaches in the Rosemary high school. The author of "Greener Prairie" is the father of two girls and three boys, two being teachers, two are now engineers and one a radar electrical technician in our navy.

## FOREWORD

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This romantic tale of the prairie portrays real life as one finds it in the irrigation and ranching country near Brooks, Alberta. Rosemary, the town near which is located the ranch of the lone pine, is a busy centre with much school sport, curling and church activity. On this ranch on the edge of Newell County lived a beautiful girl with parents, but Natalie Lane had business ability too and helped to change an ordinary ranch into a profitable turkey farm. Many came to court this charming girl but stayed to work for her and look after the thousands of gobblers on her farm.

# GREENER PRAIRIE

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## NAT OF GEM RIDGE

There were distinctly three factions along the ridge between the Bow River and the south hook of the Red Deer on this southern Alberta prairie. Here north of town of Duchess at the mouth of Gem Creek as if the swiftness of the flow of the creek had something to do with it, the big Red Deer took a sudden change of direction. It cut its way deeply through eastern prairie and flowed slightly north-eastwardly toward Empress on the Saskatchewan boundary. Something had to be really very solid here to stop the onward rush of the big Red Deer after its two hundred mile plunge from the north, and I think it was sticky clay and sound rock underneath.

Yes, there were three factions here and they had a great deal to do with the lives and the destiny of certain people who lived along this prairie steppe which sharply whirled back the waters of the big Red Deer. The factions were: first the Mennonites, second the Latter Day Saints, who had treked northward from Utah in the United States a few years before. Then, thirdly, there was another faction. No, I do not mean the fringe of Japanese settlers who were now scattered along this ridge northwest of Brooks, but rather a mixture of other people who were neither Mennonites nor Latter Day Saints.

Natalie Lane lived along this ridge midway between Duchess and Bassano, some seven miles north of the village of Rosemary. The Lanes belonged to neither of the first two factions but rather the third group and they were really a mixture as much as any of the pioneers could be who ranched here since the turn of the century. They were English and Irish. But across the road were the Carters and Slaters who belonged to the Church of the Latter Day Saints who devoutly attended their church every Sabbath. And a little way down the road toward town were the German beekeepers or apiarists, the Schoebels and Schneiders, who were Mennonites.

Natalie Lane liked all her neighbors. They were all good neighbors and good people. But her parents were not quite so fond of these irrigation farmers who had moved into the country in the later years, perhaps ten years before. Mr. Lane, Dan Lane to everybody, was one of the early cowpunchers and to him and to many of the ranchers of the early cattle days the newcomers were immigrants. He had forgotten that he too had emigrated from Michigan in the northern States nearly forty years ago. But Dan Lane had been here first and now these new people were fencing the land and growing crops — sugar beets, cucumbers, alfalfa, grain and vegetables. They were snatching the open land, the ranch land, so to speak, from the ranchers and they were pouring water upon it and making trees and other things grow. Homes were springing up everywhere. There where once roamed freely the cowboy upon his pony and where grazed his cattle on the dry prairie grass, now little open range was left. Mr. Lane frankly disliked this invasion of his domain. There was barely room left along the Gem Creek for a sheep-ranch, which he was now valiantly trying to maintain.

“Going to have to sell some of our sheep, Mary,” growled Lane to his wife one day, “yes, going to have to ship some of these sheep. There is scarcely any feed left on these hills along the creek this year. Range land is getting less all the time.”

“Well, maybe that will be a good thing, Dan. The prices quoted now in the newspaper are better than they usually are later on in the fall.”

“Then, perhaps, Dad, I can have a new dress for the fall prom. My old ones hardly fit me any more.”

“That’s it right away, Natalie! Thinking of new dresses and dances and beaus all the time.”

“No, Dad, I’m not! How do you suppose I got good marks last year at school? It wasn’t waste of any precious moments.”

“But now there is some fellow courting you or taking you for car rides somewhere all the time.”

“Dan, leave the girl alone. Didn’t you court me when you were young? Didn’t you?” she repeated when he did not answer.

“That I did and I had a hard time to beat some of

my competitors I met with in those days of the horse and buggy."

"Well, if a girl grows up and needs dresses, then she needs them," defended her mother.

"Thanks, Mother, for solid support. I should not expect Dad to understand girls and dresses, for he has many worries."

"I think I stands them, Nat," said her father with a smile. "We used to ride horseback on the prairie together. Now, it is car rides often, but not with dad."

"Just once, Dad!" corrected Natalie.

"Only once?" asked her father.

"I'm sorry, Dad, that you don't like Dale Schneider. But he is one of the finest boys in the school. He is a nice chap."

"Good! I'm glad you have chosen that kind."

"I know Dale's of another church faction than ours, but our church is in the minority here," argued the girl.

"Yes, I know it is. I do not dislike Dale. He's a good lad."

"But choose carefully," advised her mother.

"That is right," agreed her father, "choose carefully, honey girl, as your mother did."

"Listen to Daniel Lane bragging himself up," laughed Mrs. Lane.

"I'm just jealous, I'll admit. I wish I had a son to help me round up sheep and cattle on the range when it is round-up time."

"We are sorry for you, Dan," offered his wife.

"I helped you last year, Dad."

"I know you did, precious pet." And he put his arm around Nat.

"I do like helping you, Dad. I do!"

"I know. It is just that Mom needs you too."

"You have hired help, hired men," interposed Mrs. Lane.

"I know, Mary. But do you suppose there is anyone like your own folks?" He gave Nat a hug and a kiss. "Your own daughter?"

"No, of course not," replied Mrs. Lane.

"That's just it. Nat can do what any hired man can do. And I miss her pretty much. That is all."

"I'm glad that someone appreciates me."

"We both do, Nat," said her mother.

"Yes, of course we do," agreed her father.

Mr. Dan Lane went out whistling. His wife laughed.

"Dad's happy, Natalie. He's whistling an old song, 'In the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia'. It's an old love song."

"Is that so, Mother? I wish we could grow some trees here near our home like the people who are irrigating their land."

"Why? I suppose we could do more gardening, but it all takes work, Nat. We have a nice pine and a few willows along the spillway that joins the Gem Creek a few miles north of Rosemary."

"Yes, the Ranch of the Lone Pine! You can walk for a day in any direction, west, east or north, and you never see one other tree. You have flat prairie until you come to the hills where the creek cuts down to reach the big Red Deer."

"Well, what of that? O, I see, Nat. You're lonesome. How is it you don't see your neighbor, Jim Carter, any more? He used to come and play and swing you in the swing under the pine."

"Yes, he did when we were little kids. But he takes notice of Mildred Becker now. She goes to his church."

"That's right, she does. These church factions are annoying, dividing up a community, aren't they, dear?"

"Yes, they are at times, Mom. I think I'll get a few more pine trees and plant them out in front of our house. Do you know once Jim Carter laughed at our one pine tree. He said I lived out by the lonesome pine on One Pine Ranch."

"What's wrong with that, Natalie?"

"He was poking fun at it. Perhaps we should repaint our home, too, Mother. The paint is getting shabby."

"It is, I agree. We should make our place appear its best, so people make no remarks about it. Perhaps we can repaint it."

"We must, Mom, and right soon."

That evening a fine palomino entered the ranch yard. A young man seated upon the saddle was singing in a deep, happy voice. Nat listened and knew who the singer was. He came on toward the house and paused, dismounting, but he continued his song, softly carrying the tune, "O give

me a home where the buffalo roam." The impatient copper-colored steed pawed the earth, urging him on. The rider who now approached the kitchen door was Jim Carter.

Natalie Lane, who had just poured a pail of milk into the cream separator, came to the door in answer to his knock. She came out on the porch and sat down on the steps.

"Why, Jim Carter, this is a surprise to see you. And riding a beautiful animal like that!"

"Do you like my saddler? Perhaps you'd like to ride him once. The horse has a very good gait."

The horse seemed to know he was in the limelight. He whinnied with unusually good horse sense.

"He knows how to court ladies, I think, Nat."

"So I see. Is that how-do-you-do?"

"Perhaps. I called to ask you if you'd go to the school prom with me, Natalie."

"O, really? Why Jim Carter, what's wrong with Mildred?"

"Nothing; Mildred is sick though, if that is what you mean."

"I meant between you and Mildred. I wonder if you want me to play second fiddle."

"Well, I asked you first, I hope. And I wish you would go."

"I might go, but I can't decide to-night, Jim."

"Come now, can't you? You know Dale doesn't dance."

"Oh! I wasn't thinking of anyone else."

"Then you'll decide by tomorrow, Nat."

"It's really a question of a new dress. I'll see if I can go."

"All right. I hope it will be okay with your folks."

The interview soon was concluded and the copper-colored horse paced down the road with a jaunty step. Before long evening chores were finished and father came in to rest. Natalie presently broached a few questions which to her were quite important.

"Dad, do you think you would like to get some new paint for the house this fall? I shall be glad to help put it on if you are too busy," she began very diplomatically.

"I've been thinking of doing a bit of painting for quite a while. I'd like to paint the house and barn a good white

like Carters' place. Our barn has never had a drop of paint yet."

"That would be very pretty and it would be wise economy."

"Well, economy or no economy, it would look better. I've been noticing how many settlers here are beginning to paint up their homes in this irrigation district. And these white barns! How lovely they look with a background of green trees! They hit one in the eye at once, so to speak; such an improvement over the old fixed habit of red barns! Of course the white costs a little more but it is worth it."

"That reminds me of another brain-wave I had, Dad."

"What was that, Nat? I'll bet it's good, but I can't guess what it can be."

"Where do you think we could get a few more pines or trees to plant around our home? Could I help get some of them by writing letters for you or in some other way?"

"Yes, you could, Nat. If we can't get the trees at the Brooks government farm perhaps we can write to some other places."

"I'll write to Brooks or to other places for you if necessary, Dad," she agreed readily. "I like to write letters for you, Dad."

"O, by the way, Nat, you wanted a new dress. How about this? Here, take this! Would ten dollars buy the dress you want?"

"Would it? Thanks, Dad," said Nat, with real feeling.

"You're welcome. You've earned it many times! I think, like Mom said, the sheep I'm shipping this week will bring more than they brought us late last fall; the market price is better now."

"Dad, did you see who rode in to see me this evening after milking time? Did you, Mom?"

"No, I did not, Nat. Was it Dale Schneider?" he asked.

"Why, he drives a car. Dale's no cowboy."

"That he does, Nat. I forgot," he replied, laughing.

"Then it must have been Jim Carter, Nat," guessed Mrs. Lane.

"Yes, Mom, that is who it was. And he offered to let me have a ride on the prettiest palomino I've ever seen," said the girl.

And a thrill crept into her being. The flush on her



cheeks spread beautifully and quickly. She breathed more rapidly.

"Really? So what now? Tell me more, I'm inquisitive to know more. What else have you to tell us, Nat?" urged her mother.

"Well, Mom, Dad, would you mind if I attend the school prom again this year with Jim Carter?"

"So that is why he rode over to see you, Nat?"

"Yes, Dad. I suppose I could ride to a dance in a saddle."

"You would have to be careful of a new dress, Nat."

"I know I would, Mom. Of course, I could take it off."

Dad's eyes beamed with fun. "It's thoughtful, Nat, to consult your parents about things, but do be careful."

The girl smiled. "I could wear other things, Dad."

"Certainly you could," agreed Mrs. Lane.

"I see you are beginning to choose carefully," said her father.

"How can a girl choose carefully? She has to wait till a boy asks her, if he does. I told him I'd see. Anyway his church faction is more like ours than Dale's, isn't it, Dad?"

"Yes, it is, Natalie. And we hope you have a good time."

This gave her consent to go and Natalie slipped over and kissed her father. She knew he felt a bit jealous of her. He patted a hand that stole around his neck and rested on his breast.

A little later her father retired for the night, bidding them both a fond goodnight.

"Well, Nat, you killed three birds with one stone to-night," her mother ventured. "I appreciate your difficulty in choosing a companion to the school prom."

"It was not at all difficult, Mom. Only one asked me."

It was sunny autumn weather for a ride on the prairie. Most of the leaves on the trees were a shiny yellow or a golden red around the Carter home as Jim set out the next evening toward the Lane ranch. The breeze swept along the road and whirled some of this autumn brown and gold from the blanket of leaves at the edge of the trail as the palomino trotted out of the gate and turned north. Jim felt jolly and admired the beautiful scene as more crisp, light leaves showered him from the trees above. Soon he

rode on, leaving behind this flaming autumn color, where irrigation helped put the charm of nature into life on the farm.

Out on the prairie trail the grass was dry and grey. The palomino Jim rode held his head high, sensing the importance of his mission tonight almost as much as Jim Carter. Jim was filled with hope and he soon covered the short distance that separated his home from that of Natalie Lane. Minutes later the horse and rider trotted up to the doorway of the ranch of the lone pine. The girl met Jim with a smile that told he was successful in his quest, and the question of the new address had been solved she soon told him. So Jim was to have Nat for a companion at the prom.

Later Natalie's father, Dan Lane, as he came in from the barn, met and shook hands with Jim Carter on the porch steps.

"How is the harvest coming over your way, Jim?"

"It's fine. Most of the crop is safe now. And the garden vegetables and things have all been cleared off."

"Do you think this good autumn weather will last long?"

"Well, Mr. Lane, I hope it will last, and save hay and feed."

"Won't you come in awhile? It's Saturday."

"Thanks, no, this warm October evening makes one want to stay out as long as he can."

"That is a pretty horse which you are riding today, Jim."

"Yes, it is. How are things going over here on your ranch?"

"Fair. I'm shipping a number of sheep this week."

The father of the girl decided to leave the young folk to their own discussion here, so went on into the house. But it soon grew chilly outside and Natalie excused herself too.

"I must get some homework and do more studying for school tomorrow, Jim. Goodnight, and thanks for the promise of a jaunt on horseback Sunday afternoon, and for company to the prom."

But a day later another party came to see Natalie Lane in a red car. It was Dale Schneider, with whom she had once taken a ride during the summer.

"Are you planning to attend the school dance, Nat?" he asked.

"Yes, I am, Dale," she replied. "Are you also?"

"Well, though I don't dance I was going to ask you to let me drive you to it in my car."

"I'm sorry, Dale, but a companion has asked me already."

"All right," he said, and started walking away peev-  
ed."

"But thanks ever so much, Dale, just the same for your offer," she added quickly, whereupon he turned, looked back, then went on.

"These blessed church factions!" thought the girl "It is confusing to know which is right," she said, meditating her problem. "Fancy a person going, but not dancing with his lady-friend. Why don't we, Christians, all belong to one big family instead of being divided by a dozen or more little factions?" she puzzled.

But at school that day she had more food for thought. A Japanese boy, one of the several who attended her school, and the winner of a scholarship once and a prize winner in his class, Sanao Jigurki, showed he was quite fond of Natalie Lane for he had a question for her. She had treated all alike, German, English and Japanese; there were no real favorites among her school friends.

Sanao met Natalie in the hall that morning. "Nat, I heard you say to Helen, 'I don't know if I'll come to the dance or not, I have not been asked to go by any boy yet,' and I was wondering if you would care to go with me. I can get my uncle's car to take you."

"Thanks, Sanao, that was a few days ago, but now it is too late. However, it was nice of you to ask me and I shall save you a dance."

That night she laughed at her popularity. She said to her mother "Well, Mom, I had a bid to the dance from another faction today."

"Hum! That makes three, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does. I'm lucky."

"Really? Who was your knight, Nat?" asked her dad, who overheard.

"I suppose you'll laugh, Dad. But it was Sanao Jigurki."

"Not at all. Sanao is a smart lad. I was talking with

him in Wittig's store at Rosemary today. They have just finished harvesting sixty-five acres of vegetables."

"Have they, Dad? They are workers!"

"Dan, what were you doing in Wittig's store today? I did not send for anything today in town."

"Well, Mary, I often go in there just for a chat. I don't have to buy something every time. But today I bought a red hunting cap."

"That's right, Dan, it is pheasant season tomorrow."

"Yes, it is and there will be so many shooting that it won't be safe to walk across the ranch without a red cap on your head."

"That reminds me, Dad, what were you doing swimming in the creek or irrigation spillway tonight, so late in October?"

"Huh, I caught seven jackfish with my bare hands."

Really? And tomorrow I suppose it will be seven pheasants before breakfast."

"Well, I don't know. Give me time. It might be that many by night but not that many before breakfast. Well, I don't know anyone who has had better luck at duck hunting than I have, except perhaps Mr. Gabert at Rosemary."

"I've heard that he does very well," agreed Mrs. Lane.

"Very well! He's a perfect shot, Gabert's a wizard!"

"Tell us, Dan, about the duck hunting at Matoka, please."

"Well, Mary, it was more fun than the trip to Duck Factory 86. Though there were thousands of ducks at the Factory Lake, Teal, Bluewing and others, there were plenty of ducks for good shooting at Metoka. I went out in a little boat, placed the decoys in the water close at hand, then hid my boat under rushes of a sheltered cove and waited. Ducks I had seen, returned to where I set the decoys at short intervals all morning. It was the real thing — shooting you hear hunters tell about — singles, doubles and small flocks of fours and fives. Many of the mallards flew close overhead and lowered towards the decoys. Even at noon when I was busy having coffee from my thermos I had to stop and get in a shot."

"I think that was one of your best days hunting, Dan."

"Indeed it was, Mary. I gathered up my ducks soon after lunch, a good count for the shots fired, too."

"How big is that lake?"

"Matoka is a mile long, east to west, and perhaps a bit over a quarter of a mile across the middle, with a tiny island on the north shore, making a shallow bay nearby."

Then this Lake Matoka is much smaller than Duck Factory Lake."

"Oh, yes, considerably smaller. There was not a person about the lake shooting the morning I was there hunting."

"And tomorrow the pheasant season opens."

"Yes, Mary, I think I should get to bed early, so that I can be out early with the dawn."

Thereupon Dan Lane made a quick exit for bed.

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## FALL PHEASANT SEASON

At break of day October twelfth  
Brown prairie grain fields bloom a-new,  
Red caps be-deck the hunters all  
And golden autumn's skies clear blue;

While partridge, pheasants scatter wide  
And every trail a treasure holds  
And men with shotguns here abide  
The wildfowl harvest quickly folds;

Though flocks of ducks from lakes still rise  
And honking geese their music add  
The joyful thoughts that hunters prize,  
Yet pheasant beauty makes us glad.

## VARIETY HARVEST

The next morning Dan Lane was awake and astir early. He went out to the barn in a happy, hopeful mood on this first day of the pheasant season. He was whistling a few bars of some cattle ranch song, and presently noting a light in each bedroom, he set out across the prairie to the north with an eager, brisk step.

"I think I'll leave the milking to Nat and Mary and get out with the rest of the men at the first streak of light," thought the rancher, packing his favorite gun proudly and carefully.

Already many cars were upon the roads. Dan Lane saw a few pass the ranch, bent on joining the hunt as dawn was breaking.

With the early moments of grey light there was a gun report, quickly followed by another, then still another. At short intervals thereafter others were heard. The army of pink or redcapped hunters were abroad evidently. Suddenly dust followed a shot on Dan Lane's own ranch land not far from his home. It was far too close to be safe, and the rancher cursed mildly.

"The men are certainly on the job today," he muttered to himself, disgustedly. But I think we can't blame them, the early bird gets the worm, yet here the early bird may get the gun."

The pheasant hunt of the prairie had begun with zest. But in slightly more than an hour Dan Lane returned home hungry, just two birds in his bag and ending his morning tramp tired. However, he felt elated with this small success.

"It is getting harder every year to get a pheasant or two," he declared to Mary, his wife, and to Natalie at breakfast, having displayed his two beautifully-feathered birds a moment before.

"Well, Dan, with the noise we heard this morning I thought you might come home with five or six birds," sympathized Mrs. Lane.

"My gun was fairly quiet; it made little of that racket."

"It seems, Dad, that our ranch is a most favored hunting site."

"You could count a dozen red-caps in this corner of the district; no wonder that I shot but two birds."

"Oh, well, you'll get a couple of prairie chicken or

partridge, Dad, and the two pheasants will taste that much better."

"Or a couple of ducks to flavor up the pan," suggested Mrs. Lane.

"Thanks, Mary and Nat, for all your encouragement."

"Perhaps I'll go along with you and try my luck this afternoon."

"That is a good idea, Nat, yes, do come along!"

Dan Lane sat down to breakfast; he really had an appetite.

"Ho, Mary, pancakes this morning! You'll never get me filled up!"

"Well, Dad, I cooked them, they might not be as good as Mother's and then perhaps you will soon have enough."

"They certainly taste good, Nat!" And they were good!

"Well, Dan, I suppose Mr. Gabert got his quota this morning, he usually does quite well."

"I didn't see him. However, everyone seemed on hand this morning; no wonder the game warden and police check the hunters near Bassano."

"Yes, the men should leave a few birds for next year," said Nat.

"Yes, the fellows should not shoot too many," agreed her mother.

"I wonder if I could stuff and mount one of those pretty creatures, Dad. Could you save the feathers and head?"

"Yes, of course, Nat, I can and will."

Dan Lane drank his coffee, finished his breakfast and pushed back his chair with a pleasant feeling of complete satisfaction.

"Next week if it snows Mr. Gabert and a teacher from Duchess are going out west to hunt deer and elk near the Rockies. They want me to go along with them to Pincher Creek and Oldman River country."

"And are you going?" Mrs. Lane shuddered to think of winter coming.

"I may go if it does snow just to see the Fort Macleod corner again."

And it did snow. The pheasant season was short-lived. Many of the hunters did well this fall but at the end of two weeks the snow did come. It was somewhat early for

winter snow, the night of the Social Club's fall supper. There was a bitter north wind but off went the men to the foothills country on their first big hunting trip.

Meanwhile Nat and her mother worked and conversed at their tasks.

"Should I keep a couple of hen turkeys for next year, Mother?"

"Well, you can buy turkeys from the hatcheries in the spring."

"So we can, just the same as young chicks," remarked Natalie. "I believe I should prepare my birds for market very soon."

"Well, Nat, you do as you think best. Those turkeys are your own flock, your own business, to do with them as you like."

"Yes, I know, Mom. Two dozen turkeys could be a sort of a dowry of my own." She laughed at the thought of some day being married.

"Well, if you sell all except one bird for Christmas, the flock will have been a very good investment."

"At eight dollars a head it will bring a fair return. And the grain we fed the flock did not cost much."

"Quite a good sum of money to store away in the bank."

"I had good luck, didn't I? The flock of poults grew well and quickly; never lost one turkey. Perhaps I can raise more than two dozen next year."

"Two dozen turkeys are enough of a risk, don't you think, Nat?"

"Phew! Perhaps they are, Mom, especially at Hallowe'en."

"Of course, there are always risks on a ranch, even with turkeys."

"But there was room for twice as many young turkeys in the brooderhouse Dad built me last spring, Mom."

"I do not think we should add too much to our worries, you with a lot of turkeys and Dad with his cattle and sheep to worry us."

"Did I really worry you, Mom, with my flock of poults?"

"Well, no, not much, Nat. But Dad was up at all hours of the night during lambing time in the early spring."

"Still, it is a wise old saying, 'do not put all the eggs



in one basket', Mom. I have a dream of a larger turkey farm, however."

"Do you, Nat? Well, good luck when that day comes."

"Thank you for your good wishes, Mother."

When the hunting party returned from the foothills, Dan Lane with a pair of horns to mount and some fresh meat, it was time to consider preparing Natalie's turkeys for market.

"I like looking at these birds, Dad, and counting them each day at feeding time. I hate to think of parting with them now."

"That is just the way I feel sometimes with cattle. I don't mind selling sheep, though. They are so hard to count that I am glad when the flock is sold."

Dan Lane was helping his daughter killing and dressing her birds for the Christmas market.

"Was the snow deeper out toward the mountains than here, Dad?"

"Yes, it was, twice as deep. Now it is warming up a bit. Perhaps we had better put your turkeys in our cold storage lockers."

"You could then put all these birds in our lockers and store them for me, Dad, could you?"

"Yes, certainly, if you do not wish to sell them at once."

"That will be quite splendid."

"By the way, Nat, I was talking with some men in Brooks about trees for our ranch. I have arranged to get some next spring, too. Perhaps I shall get enough to plant a row along the irrigation ditch on the corner of our ranch and along the roadway."

"Won't that be lovely! Then our place can't be pointed out as the Ranch of the Lone Pine. We could plant a few by the house, too."

"Oh, yes, certainly. And near the barn and the corral."

"How long would it take for these new trees to be tall enough to shade well and shelter my turkeys a bit?"

"Not long, Nat; only a few years."

"A few years! A few years, Dad? Of course, they will have to have years to grow. Not the turkeys of course, I mean the trees."

"Even with the water of the irrigation ditches it takes time."

"My turkeys will have to have some poles to roost on until the trees grow bigger," meditated the girl as she worked. "How old are those big pines in Brooks, Dad?"

"I think they were planted about 1917. And haven't they done well? Those big trees in Rosemary and Duchess were planted much later."

"Well, I can live in hope that they grow when we plant them on our ranch, Dad. And I'm young yet."

"The trees will make quite a growth in twenty or thirty years."

"Well, I'm seventeen. When I'm thirty-five, then the trees will be larger."

Natalie Lane had other offers of help a day later.

"Do you want some help dressing turkeys, Nat?" asked Dale Schneider, with a beaming smile.

"Why, Dale, you always seem a little tardy. Were you joking or did you really want to help me?"

"I want to help you if you need help. And my father thought I might be able to trade you honey for a turkey. Could I?"

"That is a good idea. Perhaps if you had some more good vegetables or potatoes to trade too we could make an even trade."

"We have lots of vegetables and good clover and alfalfa honey."

"Well, thanks for the offer. We'll trade you a turkey, But we finished dressing the birds yesterday."

"I'll bring you some honey and vegetables," concluded Dale.

And true to his word, that afternoon Dale turned into the Lane ranch with his red car, a load of vegetables and honey for trade, enough for an even trade for a turkey. He was welcomed by the girl and her mother.

"I'm thinking of raising more turkeys next spring," Nat told him. We may want to buy more wheat for feed from you folks, and we might be glad to have some help building some brooder-houses this winter."

"I'll be glad to give you some help any time you need it."

"How was your honey crop this year, Dale?" asked Mrs. Lane.

"It was good, very good," returned the lad.

"We are storing our turkeys in our meat lockers,

Dale," said Nat. "Do you want to take yours today or leave it here till later?"

"That is fine to leave it till near Christmas, is it?"

"Oh, yes, that is just all right."

"I think Dale is very interested in your turkeys, Nat."

"Yes, Mom, he certainly is."

"Why shouldn't I be, Mrs. Lane? Neighbors should all be interested in each other's variety of harvest. Neighbors should be neighborly. Nat's purchase of wheat for her turkeys helps us with our sale of wheat, too."

"We do help one another then, Dale," replied Mrs. Lane.

"We should help each other," agreed Natalie, "and I want to thank you, Dale, for your offer of help with my new brooderhouses."

"Thank you for trading our produce for your turkey."

With these words Dale departed smiling warmly. And here two young people had established friendly relations for years to come, though their families were of entirely different factions.

"Dale even brought us some of their green tomatoes, which will ripen till Christmas," confided Natalie to her mother.

"I do like Schneider's honey and so does Dad. And wasn't it kind of Dale's folks to send us over some of their good celery?"

"Yes, it was. Schneiders always seem to have good vegetables."

"All the Mennonites raise good gardens," agreed Mrs. Lane.

That same evening the rancher, Dan Lane, was shipping a truck full of stock from his ranch north of Rosemary. The cattleliner truck had pulled in at the ranch late that day at about the time when Dale Schneider left for home. Close on the arrival of the cattle truck at the ranch, Jim Carter rode into the barnyard. He was just in time to notice Dale's red car departing, and it raised no end of conjecture in his mind.

"I wonder what he could be doing over here at Lane's ranch," he pondered.

Jim sought Mr. Lane at the cattle coarral.

"Hello, Jim," greeted Dan Lane.

"Hello, Mr. Lane," returned Jim. "Dad thought you

might have room in your cattleliner for two or three more head of his stock."

"Sure! There's lots of room. I shipped most of my sheep awhile ago. And this big truck-trailer will hold more cattle than I have to sell. We'll be along past your place in less than an hour."

Jim Carter thanked the rancher and turned toward home. As he passed the Lane ranch-house, Natalie saw him on his palomino.

"It never rains but it pours," she laughed. "Haven't we got lots of company today!"

"Yes, even Dale in his red limousine," charged Jim Carter. "I judge a fellow with a palomino hasn't much chance against a red car."

"Oh, I don't know about that. Both are good company. But Dale's going to help me build more brooderhouses for turkeys next spring. Perhaps I can get you to help me build some pole-roosts for the birds. Could I, Jim?"

"Of course you could, Nat. What are you going to do? Are you planning to enlarge the turkey ranch?"

"Yes, I am, and the trees we are planting next spring will take years to grow big. The turkeys are likely to get ahead of them."

"What's Dale doing? Selling you honey? It seems they have a good yield this year."

"Yes, they do have. They usually have plenty of honey."

"Yes, every year. And the Schneiders are good gardeners, best in the district," praised Jim Carter.

"Yes, Jim. Some day I hope to have as good a garden."

"Do you, Nat? Well, I never thought a rancher's daughter would go in for gardening."

"Or for turkeys, Jim. Or for a few hundred chickens. Well, one can make quite a living from eggs and a few hundred hens. And I don't plan to put all my eggs in one basket."

"I think you should know, Nat. You must be right. I must get home; we are shipping a few head of stock with your cattle."

"Don't forget you promised help with my turkey roosts, Jim."

"I won't, Nat." The lad moved on toward his home,

paying with his final guarantee a somewhat better tribute to the girl's business ability than he had heretofore.

"I thought it was only the German girls that want to work so blame hard," he mused to himself as his horse trotted briskly along.

The next day Natalie Lane's radio, like every other Alberta radio in the province and, in fact, like the radio of nearly every other young person in the West was tuned to the Grey Cup football game in Toronto, where the Eskimos team from Edmonton met and defeated the Montreal Alouettes for the third time. It was perhaps the greatest event in sport for the young people of Alberta and the West for many years. When she arrived at school on Monday many of her friends' first questions were, "Did you hear the Grey Cup game on Saturday?" Natalie had been an ardent supporter of the school team at Rosemary and was one of the few girls who never missed seeing the school football games. She had often cheered them with her encouragement from the sidelines.

Jim Carter and Dale Schneider both played on the football team of the school and so did Sanao Jigurki. And like many of the older boys of the Rosemary school they all three took part in some of the other school sports.

## ROSEMARY WINS AGAIN

Word had come to the principal of the school that Rosemary had won great honors again! Yes, Rosemary had won for third time in a row! Indeed it was a much merited honor and this year it was doubled. Two of the students of the school had tied for first honors in the Grade IX examinations. The principal at once called the pupils all together and announced the fact.

"Two of our people at Rosemary have this year tied for the Governor-General's award and medals for the highest marks in the Grade IX examinations," he remarked when they had assembled. "This is a very high honor and it will be shared by two of you, a girl and a boy. I wish to congratulate them and thank them for trying so hard to get their lessons. And here they are!" He called them both forward amid cheers and well-deserved applause.

Shaking hands with them, he added, "This brings great honor to our school again. It does not mean that others have done poorly; many have done nearly as well; they have given keen competition for the winners. But what race would really be a race without competition?"

A banquet for the parents and students was arranged to honor the winners of the award. At this event the ladies of the Home and School aided with the preparation of the repast and many of the school helped. The school inspectors and others praised the school and the medal winners. A very fine program of music was prepared for the affair in which a young pianist in grade ten and many others particularly distinguished themselves.

This celebration was a never-to-be-forgotten Red Letter Day for the school. It gave great impetus to the students for study. At once better effort was noted by the teachers. There was less time wasted by idlers in the hallways. Everyone got busy and did more studying, more homework too. Students learned from the speeches made by the winners of the medals at the banquet and those made by others that no one could expect to gain these high awards without continual vigilance and perseverance. Yes, it was evident to succeed that pupils must work. But both teachers and students went back to classes stimulated; they set higher goals and planned to reach them by their combined efforts.

And among the students who took greater strides to improve their work at school was Natalie Lane. No one henceforth put in more time on her lessons than this girl from the Ranch of the Lone Pine. And the school day did not spell the end of her effort. Less thought was given about Christmas presents or needless frivolities. There were more rewritten themes and a little more midnight oil used. Her chemistry and mathematics lessons were also always complete and of a higher quality.

Jim Carter and Dale Schneider did not bother Natalie, for they, too, were working. They were putting more hours on the homework and upon daily lessons. So likewise did Sanao Jigurki, and most of the girls and boys in the Rosemary High School caught the same spirit. Everyone cooperated better.

"Hello, Nat," said Jim Carter, at the end of a strenuous day at the school in grade twelve. "You do not have time for anything but lessons, do you?"

"Neither do you. You passed me twice as if I did not exist."

"Well, I have to get lessons! And are these teachers piling on the homework? Or am I a bit stupid, Natalie?"

"Neither, Jim! We have decided that all of us have to get busy if we want to win medals or get honors or passing marks."

"That's it, I suppose, Nat. Here's Dale Schneider. How's tricks, Dale? Got all the homework assignments?"

"What? For tomorrow? No, I've barely started those home lessons. You and Nat started on yours yet?"

"I've just got a fair start on my essay," confided Natalie.

"Haven't done anything yet. I've barely got assignments copied down," replied Jim Carter.

"Well, everyone is putting up good competition," argued Dale.

"And everyone will improve by this effort," suggested Natalie.

"Well, come on or we will miss our bus. Quick! Step on it!"

The three students hurried out to catch their bus that would take them home. These classmates journeyed north on the same bus. "Say, Jim and Dale, do you know the Rosemary teachers brought honors to Rosemary late-

ly?" asked Natalie, as she took her seat in the school bus that afternoon.

"How was that?" asked Jim, as he dropped into a seat across the aisle where Dale Schneider had planted his tired body.

"Huh, if it was not for the teachers none of us would win any honors," admitted Dale, to which Nat and Jim agreed.

"Well," Nat continued, "one team at the teachers' curling bonspiel at Brooks on Saturday from Rosemary won first place."

"And some of the other teams from our town won some of their games at the bonspiel, too, didn't they?" questioned Dale.

"That's right, they did, I heard, Dale," asserted Jim.

But that evening when this Rosemary schoolgirl reached home on her father's ranch more surprises awaited her.

"Here is a letter for you, Natalie," said her father, "it came today in our mail and it looks important."

The girl tore open the letter and soon learned that a prize, a very substantial one, was offered for the best turkey in a contest.

"Look, Dad! There is to be a contest, a turkey contest. It is for the best dressed bird entered."

"Well, you had better choose your best turkey and enter it."

"Should I, Dad, Mom?" she asked eagerly, "Do you think it possible I could win? What do you think, Dad?"

"Why not try? Some of your birds are pretty nice!"

"You'll never know till you try," encouraged her mother.

"Maybe I shall try then. I'll send in that thirty-two pound one."

Accordingly, the rancher's daughter prepared one of her best.

And Dan Lane, drove into the city two days later to enter her turkey. That night he returned home and met Nat with smiles at the kitchen door. He wished he could withhold the good news longer.

"How did the bird do, Dad?" was her first question. "Did my ribbons I tied on the turkey help?"

"I suppose they did. Anyway you won!"

"Whoola! Tell us about it. How did it happen?"



"Well, girl, your bird looked pretty fine and the judges decided your entry was the winner!"

"So I got first, did I? Perhaps I should have entered the Agricultural Fair with my turkey."

"Yes. And here is your prize!" He patted her on her shoulder. "Congratulations!" he complimented her.

"Rosemary wins again!" praised Mrs. Lane, smiling happily.

"Yes, Mother, more honors for our turkey farm at Rosemary. Rosemary wins again. Think, next year I'm going to get more turkeys and perhaps I'll enter the best one in the Brooks Agricultural Fair. Won't that be an event, Mother?"

"Yes, of course it will, Natalie. You might be able to compete against Mr. Hardy."

"If you beat Mr. Hardy with a turkey, you'll do pretty well," said her father. "Yes, that would be a real event, Natalie."

"I'm going to try, Father. Won't it be fun," she beamed.

"It is going to be fun watching your poults grow and develop and it is going to be interesting work for you," declared Mrs. Lane.

"But it will add responsibility," warned her father.

"We all need responsibility," argued the girl wisely.

"So we do, daughter," agreed her mother.

"My! Look, Mom, it is a pretty big prize, largest ever! Really, I never won a prize before," showing her cheque to her mother.

"How fine to have won. Better luck another year."

"Perhaps you can get some tips on turkeys from the Hardys," suggested her father. "They have raised so many."

"Yes, Dad, they have and they have won first prizes, too."

"We had better start early building brooder houses, Nat."

"Do you know, Dad, Dale Schneider has offered to help me build them. And Jim Carter has offered to help make roosts for my turkeys until our newly planted trees grow bigger next spring."

"Well, you'll need plenty of help. If you go into it like the Hardys you had better hire both of the boys."

"I may need them but both are planning to go to university."

"Natalie, you certainly do get along well with our neighbors! You do better than I ever did. Here you say you have help offered by both Mennonite and Latter Day Saint at the same time on one job."

"Why not, Dad? We have gone to school together twelve years. We ride the same bus to school every day ten months a year!"

"And neighbors should be neighborly, they should learn to help one another, regardless of creed or nationality," rejoined Mrs. Lane.

"Well, Dad, we work side by side in school every day. So why not a little sociability midst our homes and farms. What does it matter if Sanao on the next farm raises potatoes, cabbage, carrots and turnips or Dale raises bees or Jim raises wheat and hay crops? And if I raise cattle, sheep and turkeys, then we should be able to trade."

"Of course, that puts things in a different light. Well, Nat, if you can make use of the available labor on hand, you should make a success of your turkey ranch," admitted her father.

"That is encouraging to have your opinion, Dad. And I know that you and Mom will give me your loyal support."

"Certainly you can count on us, Nat," affirmed her mother.

"And this turkey section of our farm may utilize more of the waste water from the irrigation district than sheep and cattle would use. Our ranch will be more diversified."

"Of course, we will have to plan ahead for feed and housing and new fencing and marketing," meditated the girl.

"That we will, daughter," agreed her father.

"I see, Dan, Natalie is going to be quite an addition to this stock farm. She is really growing up," praised her mother.

"Yes, but I know she has been a great asset to our ranch for some time," emphasized her father, and he gave her a hug.

"Thanks, Dad," she said heartily. "But I must get busy on my homework."

"That is right," sympathized her mother, "don't let

this win go to your head or interfere with daily lessons, Natalie."

"No chance of that, Mom, our teachers are keeping good tab on it and expect little less than miracles from some of us."

"The university and the Department of Education expect a lot from the teachers, you know," advised Mrs. Lane.

"How do you think you are abused, Natalie?" asked her father.

"Well, if you can sing, you get more singing to do on programs, if you can read well, you get more reading, if you can play an instrument you get more practice and more playing, if you can draw you get more art work, etc."

"Yes, but if you skate or play football you get more hockey practice and a chance to play football," teased her father.

"Which may do for boys, but does not affect girls, Dad."

"No rest for women, just like the cook or housewife," laughed her mother. "I sympathize with you, Nat, if Dad doesn't."

"Your a trump, Mom! Thanks!"

"I still think that this program work and school magazine work is good for you, Natalie," argued her father.

"Well, I suppose you are right, Dad," admitted the girl.

"Anyway you have plenty to do, without time for mischief," suggested her father with a wry smile.

When did you ever see Nat wasting time with mischief, Dan?" asked Mrs. Lane, upholding her daughter's side of the argument.

"Right, Mom, when did I waste any time, Dad?"

And with silence that followed the last remark the girl felt relieved and set about to get some of her home lessons.

December sped past and it was not long until Christmas songs were being sung. Wittig's and Lindquist's stores and Ockey's and Harry's places were beautifully decorated for the winter festivities. Lights outside the homes and some of the stores painted a lovely Christmas thought across the land. The churches began to prepare for their special programs and services to commemorate the birth

of the Saviour. Friday before Christmas, December, 21st, was chosen for one of these programs, but there were others which served to help impress upon the minds of old and young alike the importance of the advent of the birth of Christ. There was a Christmas tree in nearly every home, around which the children all assembled with joy. The rooms of the junior classes of the school held programs in their rooms, chose names to exchange gifts and some little brothers and sisters were asked to attend these yuletide parties.

Mr. Lane was shopping in town on Saturday before Christmas and he met a little four-year-old Japanese boy whom he knew on a corner.

"Hello, Herbie, going to school this year?" he asked.

"No, I'm not. I am only four years old. But I was at the school Christmas tree party with my sister. It was yesterday."

"Oh, that is fine, Herbie. What grade is your sister in?"

"Nobu is in grade three. We had a good time."

But there were other things which showed that the people of Rosemary were devoutly religious. During this Christmas season there were two funerals, one in each of the larger churches, both of which were well attended by many friends and neighbors, some of whom were members of other congregations. One of Dan Lane's neighbors spoke to him after the Rosemary funeral service.

"It seems that everyone knows you in a small town."

"Yes. George. We have many friends here, it is better than in a city. Living here in the irrigation districts of Brooks we are all more charitable. We help one another, we are neighbors."

Yes, Dan, and we are more neighborly."

"Well, it seems as if these people from Utah, members of the L.D.S. church are. They help the needy."

"So do the Mennonites. But so do the Lutherans and the United Church," added Lane's friend, remembering Lane attended the latter.

Dan Lane, with his wife and daughter, attended the service as usual each Sunday in Brooks at the United Church. This Christmas Natalie Lane and her parents enjoyed the service more than usual. Perhaps it was the carols or the children there or the feeling of Yuletide

joy which permeated the greetings everywhere that helped. On the way home from service on this lovely Sunday they were very happy. The Whites, one of their neighbors at Rosemary, who went to Duchess to church usually, were there and had invited them to stop to visit at their farm on the way home today.

"Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!" The greetings were exchanged as the people left the church and good will smiled on the faces of all the congregation and warmed them in spite of a cold winter wind that was blowing.

"Wasn't it Christmas-like today, Mother and Dad?" asked Natalie as they drove away to the north toward the Whites' farm via Duchess.

"Christmas makes so many happy," agreed her mother.

"Yes, the church held a welcome for all, today," said her father.

## THE WINTER HOLIDAY

Nat Lane's Christmas turkey was baked in the kitchen oven to a perfect brown. It was stuffed full of tasty dressing and smelled as attractive as it looked. With the trimmings, pies, pudding, vegetables and salad everything was ready for the Yuletide feast. And the red cranberry sauce to set the meal apart! It was an exceptional picture the dinner table made with a seventeen-year-old girl placing the plates and silverware in order.

"Some of Dale's fine potatoes and celery, Mother!"

"Yes, Nat, and carrots and some cabbage salad."

"It was a good trade we made to Dale for one turkey, Mother."

"That it was, you are a good trader."

There came a knock at the house door.

"You see who it is, Nat, while I pour the gravy."

The girl opened the door and there stood Dale Schneider.

"Merry Christmas, Dale. Come in, won't you?"

"Merry Christmas, Nat. Merry Christmas, Mrs Lane. No, thanks, Nat, I just came to bring you this gift and wish you the season's best wishes. Merry Christmas, Mr. Lane."

"Mery Christmas, Dale," replied the rancher.

"Yes, Merry Christmas, Dale," replied Mrs. Lane.

"But thank you for the gift."

"You are welcome."

"Dale, I am thinking of starting to build turkey brooder-houses this winter holiday. Do you have time to earn some money?"

"I promised to help. I keep my promises."

"Thank you again. You are very kind. I may start Thursday."

Mr. Lane commenced to carve the turkey when Dale quickly excused himself for being so late and hurried away home. Natalie unwrapped the pretty package Dale had given her.

"Oh, Mom, a box of candy."

"How nice." Mrs. Lane complimented.

"You're a lucky girl!" declared her father. "Then you rope him in for work just two days later, too."

"But I'll pay him for his helping me with the carpenter work."

"I'll bet our family is the smallest one at the table this year in Rosemary," said Mrs. Lane, sitting down to say grace.

"The turkey is fine," announced her husband. "Any special part, folks?" he asked.

When grace was said he filled the plates with light and dark meat. He helped them to a generous start of vegetables and dressing. Serving the plates filled up with tempting food at the ranch table was only a holiday habit to give more style to the event. The meal was almost perfect and was the result of the combined efforts of the girl and her mother. They were very happy and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Mr. Lane looked from a window toward the roadway at the conclusion of the dinner and smiled as he saw a horse and rider coming into the ranch yard. He knew who it was.

"Let me wipe the dishes, Natalie. You have another caller."

"Really, Dad, thanks." The girl gave him her towel and apron.

When she opened the door there stood Jim Carter hugging a black and white puppy. He was one big grin. After a cordial greeting he stepped into the kitchen.

"I thought a girl could use a collie to help protect her turkey poults from the ever increasing coyotes."

"Well, Jim, isn't that thoughtful of you? What shall I name him? Oh, isn't he a pretty little fellow, Jim?"

"Yes, he is, Nat. I thought you would like him."

"I do. Thank you so much, Jim."

"I was just going to pass my box of candy around. But Jim, I must now hold this little dog and find a name for him."

"I wonder if Paddy would suit him?"

"It might, Jim. Why do you think it would suit him?"

"Maybe it doesn't suit. But Paddy was a nickname my older brother had. He was a fine fellow too."

"I did not know you had an older brother, Jim."

"Yes, I did. He was shot down in the war in Europe."

"By all means, then. We will call the puppy Paddy."

"I am glad that you like the name I suggested."

"The name suits him. He is quite likeable."

The girl stroked the dog's curly hair and hugged him close.

"You are going to make me jealous of Paddy, Natalie," he whispered. "But I am glad you accepted him and like him."

"Like him? I certainly do! Now won't you sample my candy?"

"Thanks, Nat," said Jim Carter as he took a candy, and Nat tried one.

"Mom and Dad, won't you have a chocolate," she asked.

The girl passed her gift box to them and they happily took one. Then she broke a little piece of her own candy and slipped it to the puppy, which in turn won his great friendship at once. Paddy licked her fingers and became a pal of hers immediately, almost as much as to say, "I like you, Nat." It pleased Jim Carter, who laughed when she patted the pup's head.

"I see where Paddy will get a chance to sleep on a door mat now," Jim prophesied.

"I'll have to start training him. Come, Paddy, lie down here on this mat," and she put him by the door on a mat. The dog liked the spot and seemed glad to lie there after his long ride on horseback with Jim. He lay still without a whimper.

"Are you going to curl, folks, this winter? The ice is ready."

"I don't know, Jim. Are you going to skip a rink, Dad?"

"No, I think not. I'm getting too old. I'm tired by night."

But here was a chance for Jim Carter to invite Natalie to curl on his team. There was a place for her as lead.

"We need a lead, Nat. Dad and his brother, Bill and I are on a team together. I wish you would join us."

"I wonder if I'll have time, Mom, Dad? It is such fun!"

"Oh, you had better have some recreation. You curled last year."

"But Mom, I am going into this turkey business this spring and I had better get an early start this holiday."



"Shucks, Nat, I'll come over and give you a hand this holiday."

"Really, do you want to help too? I can use you but I can't pay very high wages."

"Certainly I want to help a neighbor and I don't think wages will matter, Nat. Money is not everthing."

"Okay, then come over day after tomorrow."

"Thanks, I shall. And I shall let you know if we curl any night soon. It may be soon."

"Fine, and thanks again for the puppy, Paddy."

"I'll slip out the other door. He is sleeping on the doormat contentedly. I hate to disturb him."

"Well, Nat, are you going to have all your neighbors in this building bee of yours? If you are I believe I should get some more lumber from the lumber yard day after tomorrow to keep them busy. I suppose when they finish one brooder-house it will be another one and then another."

"You know, father, last year we were offered young poults from the hatchery pretty reasonably. I don't want good men to be idle."

"Parker's lumber yard at Rosemary will have another customer in your embryo ranch," said Mr. Lane.

"It won't be embryo very long I hope, Dad."

"It won't be embryo long with all this help, Nat," said her mother.

"At least I will not sit out there in the brooder-house to teach newly hatched turkey poults to eat. I'll get them a week older."

"That's one thing we've learned, Nat, this year," agreed Mrs. Lane.

"That's right, Mom, we certainly have."

There was another knock at the door presently.

"More carpenter neighbors to see you, Nat," vouched Mr. Lane.

Sure enough! There was Sanao, a Japanese neighbor, with a gift for Natalie's Christmas. The girl's parents passed knowing glances and smiles as the daughter received her present, thanked Sanao for it and invited him in to partake of her box of candy.

"Sanao, day after tomorrow we are having in a few neighbors to help me with a building bee. Would you like

to join us a few days and share the work and fun? The pay may not be so much."

"I would enjoy it. It would be a pleasure," the youth replied.

"Perhaps we could go for a toboggan ride with you in the evening if we are not too tired," offered the girl.

"Won't you sit down a few moments while I open your gift, Sanao? It must be something very fine, the way you have tied it in ribbons and wrapped it so beautifully."

The girl leisurely unwrapped the pretty parcel and spread out a beautiful silken scarf upon her knees. Then she put it around her neck and shoulders, admiring it. Sanao was pleased.

"It is lovely. Thank you so much," she said with feeling.

Paddy, the girl's new puppy, got up from his mat, wagging his tail as if to offer a friendly "Thank you" to the youth also. Sanao patted him affectionately upon the head.

"I see you have a Christmas puppy for a present," he said.

"He is nice, Sanao. Jim brought him to me. I call him Paddy after Jim's brother who lost his life in the war."

Natalie shared the joy of her gifts with others. Sanao seemed to appreciate the dog as a present in true Christmas spirit. Without jealousy he commented upon the little Paddy.

"The puppy's spots are pretty. One needs a dog on a ranch too."

"Yes, Sanao, he will be very useful in time," agreed the girl.

Mrs. Lane was looking carefully at the lovely scarf present.

"I am all for useful gifts, Sanao," she complimented. "This is a lovely hand-sewn material, Nat."

"A ranch is poorly equipped without a watch-dog," said Mr. Lane.

"That is right, a ranch must have a dog," commented Sanao.

At this point Mrs. Lane interrupted the conversation by passing some home-made chocolate and divinity fudge she had stored away.

"Thank you, Mrs. Lane. It is delicious," the youth proclaimed, when he sampled the smooth-textured candy.

"I have never seen this in our pantry, Mom. You hid it well from me," declared Mr. Lane.

"Mom, I like winter holidays and Christmas treats," said Nat.

"Yum, I do also," commented Mr. Lane. "No wonder mother kept this fudge hidden from you and me, Nat," he praised.

Sanao smiled and did not refuse a second piece of it.

"Won't you stay and have a game of cards or crokinole with us?" asked the rancher's wife, and Mr. Lane produced a deck of cards.

"Yes, let's see who can play 'I Doubt It'?" he queried.

Soon he had shuffled the cards and dealt out four hands. Naturally the lad could not refuse this hospitality. At the end of the first hand Natalie passed her candy again.

"What are you doing this warm, winter weather on your sixty-acre potato farm, Sanao?" asked Dan Lane, as they played and laughed.

"We are still sorting potatoes for winter and spring market."

"Many culls or knobby ones?"

"Yes, plenty. But we are getting nearly to the end of the work in our cellar. We had a good crop of vegetables, but it is hard to irrigate the fields without washing the earth from the potato hills and letting some of them get sunburnt."

"And too much water makes them grow knobs, eh?"

"Right, Mr. Lane. But I win," laughed Sanao, laying down cards.

He knew the rancher was trying to make him forget his cards by talking farm work or potato marketing or other things.

"Have you heard they have a new potato chip factory in Brooks, Sanao? A good use for our big Little Gem potatoes, I'd say!"

"Yes, Mr. Lane, I saw it in Brooks Bulletin."

"Well, we never had a Christmas as warm as this. The cattle and sheep can pasture out in the fields. The snow has practically all gone. This weather saves the hay and feed for ranchers."

"I'm sure it does, Mr. Lane. Well, I must get home, Nat."

## BATTLE OF FISTS

THE SECOND DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS three high school lads assembled at the lone pine cattle and sheep ranch as per agreement with Natalie Lane to build turkey brooder-houses for her. All three boys had some building experience at home and had taken shop work at school for a few years. The daughter of the rancher showed no favoritism between her workers. She planned to erect small brooder-houses in preparation for the spring turkey poults she expected to buy from the hatcheries. It was very warm for the end of December, a chinook was blowing, so the weather was quite favorable for the outside building. Natalie greeted them all the same as they arrived at the ranch house. And when the third made his appearance she asked them to elect a foreman.

"Dad has gone to town to buy some more lumber but we can begin with what lumber I have on hand. Let us go out to the tool shop where I shall find some nails and tools for you to use."

"Okay, Jim, you be foreman," said Dale Schneider, as they left the house porch, headed for the carpenter job.

"Yes, Jim Carter, you be the foreman," agreed Sanao.

They were soon at work setting up the frame of a small building, a brooder-house for birds. The work progressed well. Jim Carter did fairly well as foreman and the other two men worked hard. Jim sawed the boards and the other two nailed them. All day the sawdust flew from the saw in the breeze while nails sank into the wood. By night the men were tired and hungry, ready for supper.

"I think this girl is playing us all for suckers on this work," said Dale, as they put away their tools and started for the house, where the Lanes had prepared a good meal.

"That is unkind to say such a thing," accused Jim Carter. Why don't you quit if you think she does not treat you right? We really should help a neighbor without pay."

"Yes, good neighbors should help one another," declared Sanao.

After a good supper was served, the rancher's daughter gave each of her workers a crisp five dollar bill.

"This is too much pay, Nat," said Jim Carter.

"You could knit me a curling sweater, Nat, and I'll

pay you well for it," offered Sanao, who also thought he was well paid.

"You all worked hard and finished one brooder-house today."

"Yes, and we can do another tomorrow, Nat," said Jim.

Dale said nothing and departed early, wishing he had gone before.

"Shall we plan to go for a toboggan ride tomorrow evening?" asked Sanao. "We can find enough snow on a north slope."

"Okay by me," agreed Jim Carter.

"And me," promised Natalie.

The weather remained warm and clear with the sun shining on the following morning. The neighbors all arrived early and commenced work on the second brooder-house. There was little time wasted by conversation. Ashamed of his remark the previous evening, Dale said nothing and worked hard. In the afternoon they again were finishing the second building.

Toward evening they were working on the roof. Jim decided to turn a board around and saw off a bad end, rather than cut it left-handed. He slipped a little in doing this but did not fall. He was about to lay it down when Dale stood up from his crouched position and the board swept him off the roof, but he was unhurt.

"Sorry, Dale. Are you hurt?" asked Jim, peering down.

"You clumsy buckaroo! Come down here and I'll show you!"

"Purely accidental, I assure you! But I'll come down."

"Jim Carter, you lie. No accident in shoving one off a roof!"

That was too much for Jim's usual good nature. He sprang off the roof and landed feet down, squarely confronting his neighbor, Dale Schneider. "Take back those words, quick, Dale!"

"I won't, you clumsy fool!" And he swung at Jim.

Jim miraculously avoided the blow and met him with a short jab to the nose that cut his lip, too, and blood flowed freely, enraging Dale. He came at Jim like a charging bull.

Sanao had seen the whole affair from the roof and quickly hopped to the ground, yelling, "Stop, you fellows;

what will the Lanes think of us? It was an accident. Why make a mountain of it?"

"I'll shove you around! You clumsy blunderbus!" shouted Dale.

But Jim was a fair match for Dale, though the latter was heavier. He withstood Dale's rush and protected himself admirably.

"Stop, I tell you or I'll stop you," cried Sanao.

Natalie Lane heard the fracas and came from the house. And Sanao grabbed Dale who continued to swing. For a second it may have been a triangle with a girl in the fray.

"What is this all about?" asked the girl.

"Dale's in a rage and I'll cool him off a bit," Jim responded.

Dale shook loose from Sanao and Jim and Dale continued the fight for a few seconds. Sanao with difficulty got hold of Dale and held fast. Nat stepped between the boys and demanded that they stop this nonsense before she ordered them off the ranch.

"Sanao, what is all this fuss about?" asked the girl.

"Jim accidentally pushed Dale off the roof. Dale got peeved."

"Do I have to build my own brooder-houses?" asked Natalie. "I think you should shake hands and finish this building before supper. Are you going to spoil our toboggan ride tonight?"

"Not till Dale takes back what he said," replied Jim.

"I suppose I was hasty. Maybe it was an accident." Dale surprisingly stretched out his hand and Jim shook it. "Sorry."

"We have a good duck and pheasant meal ready in the house," said the girl. "Don't spoil it. And I'm counting on a few rides on that toboggan tonight."

The roof on this brooder-house was finished in amazing time. It was wonderful what a few softly spoken words could do to settle a quarrel. Why let hasty words or fist fights spoil a day?

That evening the supper was young, tender duck and pheasant meat as promised. And that evening for over an hour four young folk coasted on a north slope and had

heaps of fun. This coasting helped to make their Christmas holiday glad.

As they parted, Natalie bade the boys a merry, "Good-night!"

The following day a third building was erected in record time.

"Are you going to curl, Dale?" asked Sanao, as they finished.

"Yes, are you?" was the short reply.

"Yes, I'm curling with Kaz," said Sanao. "The ice is ready."

"I'm curling with Dad," said Dale.

"I'm curling with my Dad, too," said Jim Carter. "Kaz always has a good rink at Rosemary, Sanao."

As the next few days sped past the teams began to get organized at the curling rink. Some of the rinks were out of practice and the ice was full of runs, which made the rocks run anywhere but where they were supposed to go. It was difficult for the skip to know where to set his broom. The lead, the second, the third and the skip had trouble getting the rocks to curl where they wished them to go.

"Who have you on your rink as lead, Dale," asked Sanao, as they rode in the back of the bus to school a day or so later.

"We have Jim Carter's old girl, Mildred Becker," whispered Dale.

"I did not know you had a girl. It must be more fun curling."

"Yes, it is. I want to make Jim jealous. Mildred is a pretty good curler and a good sport," whispered Dale not too quietly.

"I wish we had a girl on our team," Sanao declared.

"I think I can make Jim wish he had Mildred on his team."

She was a pretty good curler. Mildred curled well. They won many games for a while. Dale laughed as the Schneider's team took the Lane rink for a ride with a very high count in the Schneider favor.

And Natalie curled rather poorly for awhile. She missed many shots and some of her rocks went through the house. Jim became worried and Natalie noticed it. She almost decided to quit.

"I'd better quit, Jim," she admitted one day. "Perhaps you'd better get a new lead."

"Nonsense, keep trying," he encouraged her.



## A CURLING MYSTERY

Then came the bonspiel.

"We are going to give you a run for the money or prizes, Jim," teased Dale just before the bonspiel began.

"So? So, so!" Jim answered, and pretended not to be interested or worried. "We'll see; we'll see," he said nonchalantly.

"I'll bet you wish you had Mildred on your rink."

"Dale, listen! You had better not use girls' names again in your talk about games, curling or otherwise. I take this as insulting; you'd better hold your tongue, Dale!" hotly replied Jim Carter. "You'd better remember it now I warn you!"

"I meant nothing personal. Don't get riled over nothing."

"You want me to let you wag your long tongue. Mildred is a good curler, a good lead. But Dale, you didn't say that. What you were doing was to insinuate something else."

The 'spiel then started.

Rinks drew opponents and the rinks played hard. The Schneider rink did win. They beat all comers, Tug, the potato farmer, and Kaz, the garage man, both of whom were good skips and hard to beat.

But for some unknown reason, the fortunes of the Lane rink began to improve. They were winning too. They beat Lund's and Gabert's rinks, and Tamuru's good curlers bowed to defeat against them. And at the end of the week it looked as if Lane or White rinks might meet the Schneider's rink in the final. There were just two more games finally, winners would then be in the playoff. Shiels was to play Schneider and White was to play Lane.

"Mildred is playing well," someone complimented at the end of these semi-finals.

"Yes, Mildred is a good lead," declared Dale.

Another friend complimented the girl leading the Carter rink. "Natalie is a good curler, Carter. She played quite well in this game."

"Yes, she is improving all the time," was Carter's praise.

This was a curling mystery. Luck had changed for the Lanes and everyone wondered how it happened suddenly. "How lucky," one said.

"Yes," Jim laughed. "We got new handles for her Dad's rocks and those rocks are always winners. "

But was it just handles or rocks?

"I think we will have to get the broom every time and we need every rock in every end to beat Dale and his Dad," said Carter, as they rode home together following the semi-finals.

"Yes, Dad, you have our loyal support," said Jim.

The night of the final game arrived and many were out to see the best rink. The ice was freshly flooded and sprinkled just before the match so that it would be keen and smooth. This was to be a hard fought battle. And the trophies were there before everyone's eyes, ready for presentation to the winners.

"It is going to be bloodtingling," said Mr. Carter before the game. "But let our rink keep cool and use our heads and brooms right."

And this very thing they did!

The first end was scoreless. There were plenty of guards but neither side could keep a rock in the ring for a counter.

The second end went a little better for the Schneiders. They got the first counter. It was 1 to 0 in their favor.

But the third and fourth and for the fifth end the Lane rink counted one each. Then in the sixth end they counted two, with a score now of 5 to 1.

But the seventh end went to Schneiders again so at this midway point of the game the score stood, S.2 C.5.

"Stiffen up Jim, tighten up everybody," warned Jim's dad.

"All out for this eighth end," called Dale's dad.

It looked as if they were trying for a big end to tie up the score but Schneiders had to reckon with Carter's rink, which now had a lead of three points. Jim's dad left no opponent's rocks with red tassels in the ring for them to build upon and his last rock was thrown as carefully and perfectly as the night he beat Gabert by one rock last year. This time his rock counted, taking Schneider's last rock out and then remaining on the button. This raised the score, 6-2.

"Don't you folks ever miss a shot?" asked the Schneider skip.

"Not if I can help it in a 'spiel," replied the Carter skip.

During the next end when Jim's turn came to throw the skip said, "I'd like you to lay your rock in behind this one with an out turn."

And his rock did just that. It began to break a little past the hog line, then it neatly slid in behind the front ring guard.

"Right on the button," exclaimed Dale. "It looks as if Jim, your third, can't miss either."

"Not if I can help it," replied Jim. "I hope I can get each shot."

Jim's other rock a moment later was placed for another guard after Dale had missed the first guard by a fraction of an inch. A row of three in the centre was too much for the opponents. The skip shot and got the guard twice but he could not touch Jim's counter on the button. So this end yielded another win for Carter, score 7-2.

The game was not over but it looked rosy for Carter, with his lead of five points. What was helping most was that Natalie's rocks were nicely laid each time in front of the big circle or just in the front ring. She got the broom and the weight was about right always. Even if the Schneiders won every end now it would be a close tie. What a fine thought that was for a skip!

"That a girl, Nat," complimented Jim's dad, "keep 'em coming! Now, two rocks just like your last ones," he said, as he set up the shot with his broom to begin the following end.

But the exasperated Schneiders had to get the next few ends with large counts. Carters with their good margin felt satisfied and safe but they kept trying hard. And at the hand-shake after the last rock Carters were still comfortably ahead. Then the prizes were given out and a girl on Carter's rink was very happy.

Mildred Becker shook hands with Nat and said, "Will you solve this curling mystery?"

"Nothing to solve, we just won, that's all!"

"That's all?"

"There was nothing else," said Carter's lead curler.

But she kept a secret, she and Jim shared their pleasing triumph. They had practiced the in and the out turns, holding the handles right, swinging the rock straight,

using the correct weight and getting the broom. And Jim had coached her at noon time and while waiting for their school bus sometimes. The girl reaped a benefit by his coaching. No wonder that they smiled happily now!

"We are victorious," said Jim exultantly.

"Yes, we won," she said. "But Jim, I prayed a short prayer before I threw my rocks," she confided.

"So did I, I think, Nat. Maybe it helped us to win."

Having won the bonspiel, Jim Carter decided he was to have some boat rides the next summer. Jim liked hunting and felt that a small boat to row would help him collect his ducks along the irrigation canals or on a lake during the fall shoots. So he started to build a row boat at school in the shop one-half day per week. Sanao helped him at odd times and the boat progressed favorable and rapidly. In due time it was completed and named, "Dry Bones". He often dreamed of the early spring day when, the ice gone and water in lakes and canals again, he would take the boat down to see if it were water proof. He hoped Natalie Lane might like to have a ride in his ship. He knew Sanao would come for the initial voyage. Japanese were good swimmers and his friend and neighbor came from brave, seafaring people. Jim made a good pair of oars to go with the boat. Often in the early spring he would sit in "Dry Bones" and pretend there was water and try to get the stroke of the two oar propellers.

"Wouldn't I be proud to ask Nat to come for a ride in my boat," he thought. "Rowing would develop my muscles too. And for this sport there would be no cost of gas or garage repair," he meditated.

Jim had been jealous of Dale, driving a fine car, which attracted any girl. "Now I have a boat which I have built with my own hands," he said to himself. "How one girl had admired my palomino! And she liked to ride horseback, as she was a rancher's daughter," he thought.

Mildred Becker was a bit jealous of Nat, as a result of her being on the Carter rink. One day at school a week after the 'spiel she let her know how she felt. "I suppose you'll be boating in the spring and summer," she teased.

"Hum! I wish I had the time some of you have! I may be looking after young turkeys all spring and summer," was her brisk rejoinder.

## TURKEY POULTS ARRIVE

February is usually very undependable. This year it was indeed stormy. With mountain snowdrifts and nights and days of wind for nearly a week it closed outlying parts of the district to traffic. The roads being blocked badly by drifts, school buses were delayed and often unable to travel the whole of their daily routes. Some of the roads they gave up as impossible. With continued wind it was likely to be a week before some of the roads would again be opened, as road plows could not cope with the miles of drifts from fence to fence,

It was in such weather as this that a big truck loaded with crates of young turkey poults arrived at Rosemary addressed to Miss Natalie Lane. They had been shipped from Calgary hatcheries at a special low price for a larger number and they had been kept at the hatcheries an extra week to ensure healthy young birds able to feed.

Expecting this shipment of young birds, Natalie was prepared for them with heat and light in the new brooder-houses. Now the road was blocked to town and school! No wonder the girl worried about what would happen to her young poults if they arrived in town now.

"Mom, Dad, what on earth will happen to my baby turkeys?"

"I don't know, Nat," sympathized her mother, "But God always provides for the feathered folk as well as for us."

"Thanks, Mom, for those cheering words."

"It must be one of the worst blizzards we've had in years."

"Yes, Dad, I know. It's been hard to get the animals out to drink and feed to them."

"That it has! I didn't see anyone on the road to town today."

"Don't worry Nat," consoled her mother.

"How can I help it, Mom?" said the girl, who was eighteen February 1.

Disappointment and worry bothered the rancher's daughter and made her heartsick. Not given to showing her feelings over ranch or business matters, it was surprising to see two tears roll down her cheeks and drop upon the book she was trying to study.

"Come, Natalie, won't you make me a cake if you can't study?"

"Oh, Mom, I can't. I would make a mistake or burn it."

"I'll see that you don't spoil it; come now, here is a recipe."

"I'll tell you what, Nat," promised her father, "if these roads are not opened up tomorrow, I'll walk to town on my snowshoes and see about getting them opened my self."

"Oh, no, Dad, you couldn't. You know it is too far to walk."

"I used to be able to walk that far," he declared. "It would be easier than riding a horse through the snow-drifts."

"I don't think you should, Dan," said Mrs Lane.

Their daughter set about making a cake, her mother checking the things she did and what the recipe called for in her cook book.

"There now, that will be useful," encouraged Mrs. Lane.

"I hope so. I hope it will not fall, Mom."

And in an hour or less she mixed some icing sugar and made a pretty pink and white frosting for the cake that had turned out fairly well. After dinner she settled down to her school lessons again and did some real good work. Her mother, who had studied Whittier when she was young, suggested that she try to write a poem or story about people being isolated by snowdrifted roads.

"Anything I write will be unreadable if we do not get some word from Rosemary tomorrow," the girl declared.

"This responsibility is good for you, Nat, but you must not let it get you down."

"I'll try not, Mom. You are always so good to me, so helpful."

Dan Lane rushed into the house very excitedly a little later.

"Natalie, I think they are opening the road to town. And behind the snow plow I can see a truck on the road."

"Really, Dad? Oh, Mom, my turkey poults, my babies!"

The girl donned her warm coat and mitts. she hurried out to the brooder-houses, checked the temperatures

and other things of importance. Then she heard shouts down the road toward town. Sure enough! There hove into sight a road plow! And a little later the truck pulled into the ranch yard with its load of turkey crates. Sanao jumped from the cab, greeting Nat with joyous shout.

"Natalie, We've got your poults, hundreds of them! And they are all fine, alive as any I ever saw!"

"What are you doing with them? How do you happen with the truck?"

"The plow got to our place last night. They had tough going so I fed the poults in our barn last night."

"Sanao, you're my hero. You make me happy!"

The girl threw her arms about the somewhat embarrassed boy and kissed him. He enjoyed this friendship and reward for his thoughtfulness, but he did hardly know what to say.

"I'm just your neighbor, not any hero. The truckman is the real hero to get through all this snow and drifts on our roads."

"Yes, you are my hero, Sanao! You tried to feed and care for my birds!" she declared.

The girl was thankful; she was glad that someone she knew had helped and she was happy that the birds were alive.

"I am just neighborly. You would have helped your neighbors or friends the same as I did," the boy replied. "I like poultry. We are getting some poults, ourselves, in a month or so."

"Well, thank you so much, Sanao!"

Sanao set about helping Natalie and Mr. Lane get the birds into the new brooder-houses.

"You have none too much room for all of them," said he to Mr. Lane.

"It is a very good thing that Nat got you, boys, to help build these new quarters for her poults," admitted Dan Lane.

"There must be several hundred, Mr. Lane," remarked Sanao.

"Five hundred or more, aren't there, Nat?"

"Yes, Dad, there are. Maybe closer to a thousand. But who could count them all?"

"Only one died on the trip, I think," said her father.

"That is the only one," declared Sanao.

"That is really a record," said the girl. "What did you feed them last night? We will owe you a turkey for your work."

"Mother helped and we fed them several things."

Pans of water were set for the young birds and soon Natalie had some suitable food ready for the poults. By supper time they had things shipshape in the brooder-houses. Most of the flock seemed very comfortable and many of them were interested even in eating.

"You'd had better stop to have supper with us, Sanao," Natalie suggested. "You have not been over here since Christmas."

"I've been too busy at school and with homework."

"Have you been out tobogganing since Christmas?"

"Not much, Natalie; perhaps you would like to try it again."

"I'd like to go tobogganing but I'm afraid I'll be busy now with my hundreds of young turkeys."

After supper the girl talked with Sanao about school work a little while. She warmly thanked him again for his help. When he left Natalie made a visit to see her young poults before retiring.

But a few days later the girl made a special call upon Sanao's mother to thank her personally for the help she had given her birds. They smiled at each other in true friendly and neighborly fashion.

School buses now made their daily rounds again and students were busy as usual with their books. But Natalie Lane was more than busy the next few weeks. When a month slipped by a second shipment of young turkey poults arrived at her ranch. Fortunately warm weather was favorable to the new turkey farm and with the help of her three neighbor boys on Saturdays the hard work did not get the best of the girl. Yet, it was a busy farm with a team of three boys helping Mr. Lane and Natalie every weekend.

So Natalie Lane's turkey ranch grew and grew until there were thousands of gobblers. Jim Carter kept his promise, helping to build many turkey roosts for the ever increasing flock of birds. Dale Schneider helped furnish supplies of food and Sanao Jigurki helped Natalie feed her young poults. In a way there was friendly competition here between the three factions of helpers. And in



many ways the success of a ranch, turkey, sheep or stock, depends largely upon the efficient hired men as well as as the management.

But with an early spring many of the young birds were able to take to the open. An old cattle shelter helped protect some of the poults on inclement days of March and April. And before long the new turkey ranch was a real sight to see.

## WATER IS ON

It was in April before the water was turned into the irrigation ditches or canals, released by the dam gates on the Bow southwest of Bassano. There was much rejoicing by the people, ranchers and mixed farmers alike. To many a new feed of fish the water gave. To all there was fresh, clear water from the Bow. But for the irrigation farmer there was plenty of hard work. Soon the water in the canals had spread to the Red Deer, twenty miles and more to the north and east past Gem. It watered the Rosemary country, the Lane and Hardy ranches. It flowed past Duchess and Brooks and brought back to the parched prairie a greener earth, and to the fields far and wide it offered moisture to grow crops of hay, grain and vegetables.

On the Lane ranch there was plenty of work, the wool shearing and the calf branding, and this year there was a flock of over a thousand young turkeys.

"I think I'll have to help plant vegetables at home," said Sanao one day. "And I might not come to help you for two weeks."

"Thanks, Sanao," replied Natalie, "I shall be glad when you are able to come. You have helped such a lot, I'll miss you."

"I'll be busy with our bees, Nat," said Dale about this time. "I won't be able to give you much time for a month."

"We'll be glad of your help when ever you can come," said Nat.

But water or no water, Jim Carter stayed on and put in every weekend at the ranch of the Lone Pine. Natalie appreciated his reliable, steady help, as she was able to do better at school. On Sundays Jim began to yearn for his row in his new boat and he asked Natalie if she couldn't go with him for a change of scenery.

"Oh Jim, how I'd like to! But I can't spare time till school is out and summer is here."

So he contented himself with a cherished hope. Meanwhile he tried out his new boat alone one day. It was real fun and he kept telling the girl about it until one day she almost was persuaded to take a ride with him. But he ended up by getting his friend Sanao to go with him. They

laughed together and thrilled over the craft that they had built. They even had a swim.

"It is going to be well worth while all summer and fall."

"Yes," agreed Sanao, "We should have loads of fun in this boats on the canals and lakes, even Lake Newell perhaps."

So they did, even catching fish sometimes.

Early this spring a new forest of young trees sprang forth along the irrigation ditch for a half mile near the ranch house on the Lane farm. Dan Lane had obtained hundreds of young willows and poplars. Several rows stood along the fence, changing the whole appearance of the place. And in a few years there would be shelter for turkeys and stock.

One day the rancher had a real surprise for his daughter.

"Oh, Dad, you are painting the barn and the house! How lovely the white walls look. It makes things look so clean."

"Yes, from now on we shall try to keep the place more respectable in appearance, Nat," he replied.

"I'll have to win some prizes now with my turkeys."

"No doubt you will this fall, but make a pass at school."

"I'll be sure that I do that too."

"Such a blessing that the water is on early this spring."

"Yes, Dad, it makes a great difference for the turkeys."

"And for the sheep and other animals."

Soon great fields of vegetables were planted in this watered prairie and quickly there appeared green sprouts all across the land, potatoes — just acres of them, cabbage, carrots, turnips, — and hay crops spread over the flats, encouraged by quantities of flooding. And every farm was a beehive of industry. The bees flew across the prairie early in search of blossoms, the alfalfa and clover and all the early blooms.

Lanes' young turkeys grew rapidly and one could hear the song of this large flock a mile away. Miles of feathers seemed to stretch across the ranch! And here there was plenty for all hands that could be turned to the new work of feeding the flock. Natalie's little Paddy was big enough

to follow the girl around the ranch and helped to give a little protection already to the fast growing birds from coyotes. He often liked to splash in the waters of the irrigation canal.

"Come here, you little water rat, Paddy," she called to him.

He shook the water from his back and came quickly at her call. He was fast learning to mind and to be useful. He loved Jim Carter who came to help at the ranch weekends, and Jim loved him. There grew a shared recognition of friendship between the three — Natalie, Jim and Paddy. Sometimes Jim brought one of his young pups with him on a Saturday and did Paddy have a real romp and roll with Jim's dog. Such fun it was to watch them!

"Paddy is very glad when you bring along your little fellow so that they can play together, Jim."

"All animals are interesting, but dogs especially, Nat."

It was less than two months till the examinations when one Saturday Natalie asked Jim a personal question.

"Do you think you will go to university next fall?"

"I think not; It costs pretty much, Nat."

"Then if you do not go, would you consider working here?"

A smile crossed Jim's countenance, — Nat was so businesslike.

"I'm not fond of turkeys, but I do not mind working for you."

"I shall be glad to have the help and I think if we have luck this turkey business will grow from year to year."

"Of course, there will be other ranch work, I suppose."

"There will often be ranch work for Dad as well as the work with the birds."

"I'll let you know if I decide to do otherwise, Nat."

"Thanks, so much. May you find that you like this ranch work."

Nearness to final tests at school became ever more apparent for everyone was working to the limit of his capacity. There were many reviews and checks on the lessons covered. Nat and her three neighbors had little time for anything but their studies. May, June were important months that each one puts forth all his energy. Even sports were let pass by the seniors of the school somewhat.

Lessons came first here at least for Natalie, Sanao, Jim and Dale this year.



Still Jim was enjoying his boat once a week and sometimes Sanao did also. It was a relief to get away from books a few hours once a week and these two boys found comfort from this little craft and their friendship.

## TREES ARE GREEN AGAIN

And now the trees at Rosemary, Bassano, Duchess and Brooks were a rich green again. The boles seemed to even have as green a bark as the smaller limbs and the leaves burgeoned out with the warmth of summer, stretching up to the sun and the skies. The long days brought forth the green verdure on every hand — there was a freshness as beautiful to see at every turn of the road. It was a pleasure to hear now the rush of the irrigation water and see what it could do for the growth of plants and all nature. The birds were back and flocks of geese and ducks had gone north long ago. The birds songs were heard at early and late hours.

It was an interesting ride down to the Red Deer from the Lane ranch and one Sunday afternoon Jim Carter persuaded Natalie to accompany him. He let her ride his palomino and was she full of pride and thrills that day! They followed the water spillway a few miles to the east down past Duchess and enjoyed the rush and roar of the waters as it dropped to the Red Deer at the eastern turn of the big river. Both the girl and the lad felt that this country was where they belonged, — the open prairie and on horseback in this ranching country.

They had both grown up here on the edge of the prairie and now with the irrigation close at hand, it was a greener prairie! The trees along the river were wonderful and the two young people were delighted with each other's company. They were both older today, — nearly through high school — and they were having an experience that seemed different. They were really growing up.

"Natalie, I was wondering today if you might consider a partner in that turkey farm of yours." Jim waxed a little more eloquent and spoke bravely. "Not an ordinary partner, for the dollars of profit. But I think you understand what I mean, one that likes the partnership."

Natalie blushed a pretty pink, a peach blossom in the springtime. She waited, hoping he would say more.

"Yes, I think I understand what you mean. I'll admit I have sometimes thought of it myself. But perhaps we should not do anything rashly. We ought to keep it for consideration awhile, don't you think, Jim?"

"Yes, you are right, Natalie, my ranch manager. I'll

tell you what! We shall talk it over when school is out and we have our July boat ride together."

"That is something that I have looked forward to as well as you, Jim. I think it would be fun to ride back by the old Duchess road today. Shall we, Jim?"

The ride home was not too long for these old friends. In fact the road could have been longer. But neither wished to hurry home. And their horses seemed to walk just that way.

Sanao and Dale were back each weekend now to help at the ranch and they tried hard to please Natalie and Mr. Lane also. They did their best to make a success of the new turkey farm that Natalie was making of the ranch. They liked working for her as well as Jim Carter did. And they could find plenty to do. Perhaps there would be a job for them all summer long here. Ranching was fun in the summer even on a turkey ranch.

When Natalie brought home the announcement that Wednesday was the night of the next Home and School meeting, her father and mother decided that they should go. It was to be a special meeting with a speaker from High River, and a new candle-lighting program.

"We had better go, Dan. It is not long that we may have a girl at school. And I like to know what the school is doing."

"Yes, we should go. The Home and School are always trying to do something for youth. What a lot they have done to help the teachers right here to improve the school life at Rosemary."

So they attended the meeting which they agreed was the best one yet. They stayed for lunch afterward and enjoyed the luncheon with the other parents who came out that lovely, warm evening."

"Wasn't that candle-lighting very well done, Dan?" said Mrs. Lane, as they started home. "Those teachers who took part and others spoke so one could hear them. I liked it very much."

"Well, I liked to hear that member of the provincial executive speak. She told about so many things we ought to know about."

"Yes, Dan, I'm so glad that we came."

"Well, parents ought not to miss one of the Home and School meetings. It is time that parents knew more

about school and education in general. We'll not miss the next meeting. It is too bad that Mrs. Wittig has been sick, as she always made everyone feel so welcome. There are eighty members now."

"I thought the idea of the fathers calling on the teachers to get them to come out to meetings was a good one."

"Here, here! Perhaps you would like me to go around and look up a teacher for the next meeting."

"Well, Dan, there were not so many teachers there. I believe there were less than half of them there."

"Yes, I noticed, but from the examinations Natalie and the boys are telling about, I imagine the teachers have been sitting up late to get them marked and their reports made out."

"Well, I don't know which is the worst job, farming and raising a lot of turkeys, acres of vegetables or teaching a room full of children."

"You should have included looking after a herd of cattle or a flock of sheep or making meals for ranchers."

"Well, anyone of those jobs really keeps one busy."

It was late, after midnight to be exact, when the Lanes got home so Natalie was in bed and did not hear about the Home and School meeting until breakfast time the next morning.

"Well, Natalie we could see our white ranch house in the dark last night as we came home," remarked her father.

"I'm glad you went if for no other reason than to see how pretty the ranch barn and house are now, Dad."

"Natalie, it was home in the old days on the prairie when we came to it in a covered wagon, just like that Bassano lady paints it today. And I think it was attractive even then."

"Mother, I suppose you were like all the early pioneers. Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam."

"Yes, girl, that is it," put in her father, "Mom loved it."

"Of course, it is greener and prettier prairie now."

"Well, Nat, a white house and a clean, white barn make a difference nothing else can make," declared Mr. Lane.



"That's right, Dad. But there is my school bus and I've got to hustle. Goodbye, Mom and Dad."

She kissed them both, grabbed her books and ran, leaving her happy parents finishing their breakfast coffee.

"Isn't she a good daughter?" asked her mother.

"Yes she is," agreed her father, "She makes the ranch sing."

"Right, Dan, she is our brook, the gold of our greener prairie!"

"Well, this ranch would be quiet and forlorn without her."

"Her turkeys stir up a noise; they flap wings and spread feathers."

"And that special price on the last shipment of birds doubled her flock of birds. Must be three thousand now."

"All of that! A full time job for a man!" said her mother.

"Funny how a girl can muster so much energy."

Working for the Lanes on Saturday as Jim Carter did, often linked into Sunday, which bound two weeks together.

Jim used to think, "My Sundays are like the green trees that are growing along the waterways. They seem to bind the weeks together. They make me think of a pleasant shade with the leaves overhead, shielding me from the hot sun."

One day he said to Natalie Lane, "Could I go to church with you folks in Brooks tomorrow, Natalie?"

"Oh, Jim, it would be nice to have you come with us. Do!"

He certainly did. He had invited himself, so he must make himself no burden to be packed along. He washed Lane's car.

Sunday morning he came over with a song in his heart.

"Hello, Jim, thanks for washing my old car last night."

"It was nothing, Mr. Lane."

"Jim, you certainly make one think you like work."

"I like more than work. I like your daughter, Natalie, too."

## THAT WINNING TURKEY

Mr. Lane thought a moment. He should not say it but he did. He gazed out across the fields covered with turkeys, feathers that began to cover the prairie ranch. "Well, on this ranch it might be hard to pick a winning turkey, but I don't think it would be difficult to find a good girl."

"I think I could chose one here easily," Jim responded.

Natalie was lovely in some new summer clothes that Sunday morning when she came to sit in the back seat of the old Lane car with Jim Carter, while her father drove to Brooks. The turkeys on the ranch gobbled an unusual remark in turkey language when they saw her. They fanned their wings and the turkey jargon continued until the whole farm boomed with their song.

"Natalie, it seems you are noticed by the birds more on Sunday," said her mother, but no one could help noticing her today.

Paddy did, he even barked a "Good morning."

"There, Paddy," she said quietly, "You stay right here and watch all the turkeys, I'll be back in a hour."

Jim Carter said when she was in the car and they began their ride past the greener prairie with trees at every home along the way, "Natalie the whole farm turned out to say good morning to you."

"Why shouldn't they? I turn out early daily to feed them."

"But it was no uncommon greeting. I'm glad I came along."

"Are you? So am I. It is a beautiful day."

Mr. Lane drove to Brooks by the new trans-Canada highway and came back by Duchess. The leaves on the trees and the breath of spring in the air made an unforgettable day of this drive.

It was the usual service that morning in the Brooks United Church, — sweet organ music, pretty flowers; the choir sang some restful refrains and the message was a forceful one as it was every week. Then with that friendly handshake at the close, a new kindly thought went home to each one.

"I like your church service, Nat," confided Jim as they walked back to the Lane's car this sunny day.

"I'm glad, Jim. Come again with us, won't you?" she asked.

"May I? I think you make me happy to walk or talk of things."

"Do I?" No other words seemed ready or necessary and the girl was quiet for minutes. "The organ plays for me a whole week."

"The music was the best. It was soothing," said Jim.

When they reached the farm Natalie Lane said to Jim, "Choose me a winning turkey from all that flock."

There were thousands of heads and wings. Heads were all turned toward the car returned from church. It was a wonderful sight. Paddy barked a welcome to them and as the girl went into the house there was a new song in her heart. She was cheered by a turkey song from the fields. It was a greeting home few received.

Jim stayed for dinner and Sunday was a new experience for him.

A week later two other cars drove into Lane's ranch yard at two and three thirty. The first was red, it was Dale Schneider's and he wanted to take Natalie for a ride that spring day to see his bees.

"Go for a drive anywhere, Nat? Want to see my bees?"

"Oh, Dale, thanks. I've just returned from church in Brooks and now I have to have a rest. It is kind of you to offer."

At three thirty another new, blue car crept quietly into the yard and up to the doorway. Sanao Jigurki stepped from the car into the sun and knocked at the door.

Here were the three factions again, three boys courting the Lanes' daughter, Natalie. Natalie Lane saw Sanao dressed his best with a new tie to match the new car. He was smiling elatedly. This was a real surprise!

"A new car, Sanao, isn't it? My, My!

"I wonder if you would like a little ride in our car, Nat. Mother invites you over to tea. You haven't been over, she said for months and months. Please, neighbor, come over."

This was real strategy. Sanao had won. Natalie surrendered.

"Well, I haven't time, neither have you, we should study."

"Not all day Sunday, Nat."

"It is close to exams, Sanao. But if you come back in an hour I'll go over to have tea with you folks. To you and your Mother I owe much more than this. True neighbors."

"Thanks, Natalie. I'll be back in an hour."

She was ready. Sanao drove slowly and carefully. The tea was neighborly but simple, like real friends should laugh together cheerfully.

"I'm so glad you came, this car wouldn't be fun without Nat," said Sanao, as he drove her back home.

"Thank you so much," returned the girl, accepting the modest admiration. "It is nice to have you say so."

"It is the truth."

Jim still rode his palomino, regardless of new blue or red cars. One day I'll take Natalie for a boat ride in my own boat. We won't have to have new cars to enjoy ourselves," he hoped.

One day Natalie announced she had found in all that flock of turkeys of hers the biggest prize winning bird.

"I'm going to milk-feed some of that early flock of birds," she planned. "Mom, Dad, they say prize thoroughbred horses should be born on January first; perhaps prize turkeys should be born before February first."

"Perhaps that is true. The older bird has a chance to develop better by fall, that is certain."

"Anyway, they can get their share of the food better and some of those early birds seem to have got the growth already."

"Life is made to seem worth while since you have got interested in these birds. Are you going to keep your three boys helping with the turkeys after school is out, Nat?"

"Well, Dad, Jim seems to think he will stay. I'm not so sure of the other two. Sanao has to help with the potatoes and vegetables at home and Dale has his bees and honey."

"We are lucky to have as much help as we have from them, Nat. And there is plenty to do," declared her mother.

One day a little later her parents saw Natalie with

some special food going across the turkey field with a whole flock of birds following her. She was building up some of her older flock for prize winners. And many days thereafter she spent a little time with the flock giving the older birds some special feeding.

Then came the examinations at school and the school was over for the year and for all time for some of the older pupils.

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## GREENER PRAIRIE

By

William Wilder McKinley Parker

It's greener prairie at Rosemary,  
The water fresh from crystal Bow,  
The land is ready, seed to sow,  
The farmers know their crops will grow;

In greener prairie at Rosemary  
Hay-meadow's green and trees are green,  
Leaves burgeon out, spring's changing scene,  
Well cared-for gardens sprouting green;

With greener prairie at Rosemary  
The life of ranch and farm town  
For fowl, for field, and sheep renown,  
And drink for cattle black or brown;

On greener prairie at Rosemary  
Where bees will hum, Alberta's sun  
Will blossom flowers, O spring is fun,  
See honey-makers on the run;

On greener prairie at Rosemary  
The Gem potatoes here shall grow,  
And goodly yields the planters know  
With water fresh from winding Bow.

## RENDEZVOUS

Now that Jim had his boat at the main canal when the holidays came he planned the boat ride with Natalie. It was to be a picnic for her, Jim promised to let her row, this her first boat ride. It was to be the greatest fun! And Nat rode Jim's palomino.

"I'll work for you till you make this harvest of the turkey crop," said Jim as they rode along. "Then we'll talk about the partnership in the turkey raising for another year if we both like the work and if it is profitable. You'll know and I'll know by then. The birds are all growing fine, I know you'll have some prize birds. But don't you work too hard, Nat?"

"No, I like the work."

"Then I'm glad to help you."

"Oh Jim, thank you so much. You are patient with me."

"I like helping you. You know that and I know something else that you know."

The girl knew she knew. She did not ask what. They had come for their first boat ride today and both thought of saving any other thing for a later date.

They reached the water and fastened the horses close by. A light breeze was blowing on this bright, warm day; they happily embarked in Dry Bones as Jim called his craft.

"What a name for this boat. But it doesn't leak, Nat," remarked Jim, laughing at the name. "Dry Bones, it is."

"I'm glad it is dry. I don't want to swim," said the girl.

And they did ride. They took turns rowing, at first Jim helped to teach and illustrate the stroke, then letting Natalie try to handle it herself. She once or twice used one oar too much, swinging them around in a circle, at which they both laughed. It was fun though. And Natalie liked to be doing things. It was great exercise and Jim said, "I've developed arms of iron since I've been rowing. My muscles and strength has grown rapidly with the use of the oars."

"I can see how it takes strength. I'll let you row again while I rest," said the girl. "After I get used to it, I won't tire quite so soon."

"Then you'll come boat riding again, Nat. You like it."

"Of course, I like it. Why shouldn't I?"

"Then I'll leave something I wanted to say till another day. Shall we row again in a week?"

"I think one perhaps should do it regularly to get used to it, Jim. Then it would be easier."

"Okay, that's a deal. I'll be glad to have you for a rower in my Dry Bones."

The palomino was glad when they were ready to go home and Natalie was happy to ride again on this horse. He had a good gait and they did not hurry. It had been a good day, a change of fun and promise of new experience ahead.

One night this week a terrible prairie fire broke out near the turkey farm. There was plenty of wind and the day had been hot. Men came from all parts of the district to fight the flames that threatened to envelope some of the homes of the farmers and ranchers. Some people from as far as Bassano and Duchess came to help. Ploughs had made furrows everywhere all afternoon but to no avail. A spark jumped the furrows and the fire ran again.

It looked as if the new turkey farm was in the line of danger several times. But settlers finally turned the flame past the Lane ranch and beat the fire out with wet sacks. It was quite a disturbing evening, especially for the girl of the Lane ranch, but luckily the wind lowered at sunset and the danger was over at last. Men and women both thanked God for the end of the danger that night at Rosemary.

When they went for a boat ride again Jim and Natalie were perhaps ready for that talk Jim was waiting for. He had attended church that Sunday with Lanes at Brooks, and Natalie liked to go boating with him. Things looked as if their rendezvous now was a good time for a complete understanding.

"Do you think that you could stand a very personal question today, Natalie," asked Jim, as they sat comfortably in the row boat.

"Yes, what is it?"

"I've been thinking that when we do form a partnership next fall or winter it could be not only for a turkey farm but for everything, Natalie. I love you."

He sat down on the rowing seat where she was ready to start, the oars in her hands. A strong arm drew her to him and he kissed her. "I've waited a long while to ask you this. It had to come sometime and you knew it."

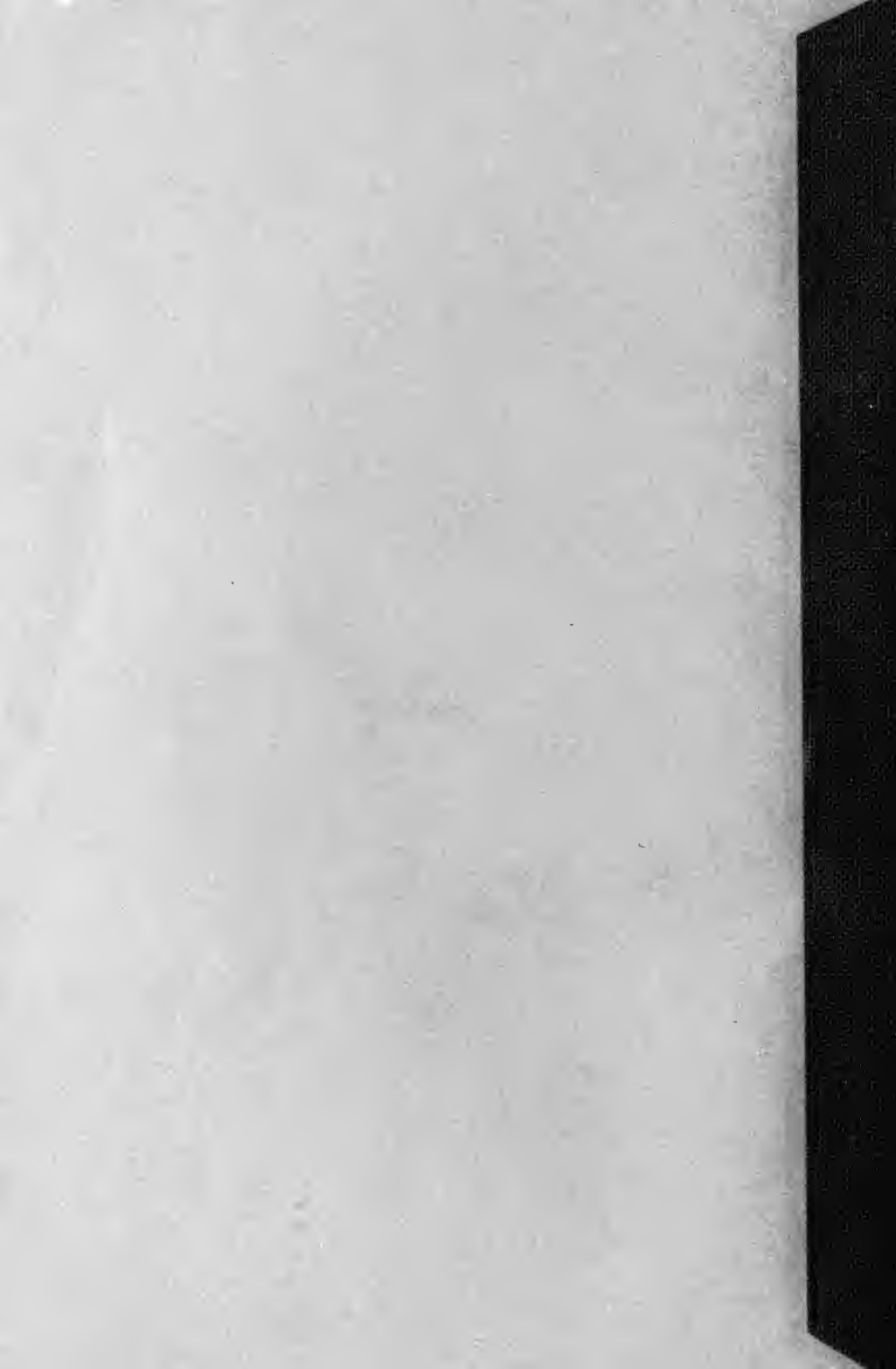
"Yes, I knew it," she murmured. And my answer is yes."

There was complete understanding now in the greener prairie and on the Lane ranch. And Sanao was Jim's best man at the wedding that winter.

(Any similar names to people of this part of the country are coincidental.)







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McKinley  
Greener prairie

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